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THE

BOY BUGLER

IN CUBA.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,  
AUTHOR OF "BUFFALO BILL'S BOY MASCOT," ETC.



THE BOY BUGLER.



# The Boy Bugler in Cuba;

OR,

## THE COWBOY CLAN ON DECK.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE BOY BUGLER'S MIDNIGHT CALL.

An alarm rang out among the cattle-men of the Rio Grande.

The Boy Bugler, whose duty it was to ride like the wind among the ranchers, sounding his wild notes of rally to the Cowboys' Secret League, had dashed along upon his swift pony in the darkness of the night, the clear tones resounding far and wide.

The members of the Cowboys' Secret League knew the signal only too well.

If heard by day it meant a rally against Mexican cattle thieves or Indians. If heard by night it was a quick call to the rendezvous, and to come armed, well mounted and ready for any duty the captain of the league chose to send the devoted members upon.

Men herding cattle on the prairies heard the Bugler's wild call, sprung to their feet, and, leaving a man or two on guard, mounted their ponies and rode to the rendezvous.

Cowboys asleep in their homes were awakened by the ringing notes, and, as though it had been the sound of the last trumpet, they sprung to obey.

Others, enjoying a dance at a fandango, flirting with a lady-love, or engaged in a carousal in the camps, obeyed the summons and began to wend their way to the scene where they were to meet, to know the cause of the alarm and hold their lives ready to the sacrifice if the duty demanded it.

And so along through the night rode the Boy Bugler, sounding the notes which called to arms and duty.

Winding among the hills where the ranches lay nestled, speeding across the prairies where cowboys guarded cattle, riding at a speed which few horses could long stand, and ever keeping up the weird notes of his silver bugle, the boy rode on.

No fatigue deterred him, no danger daunted him, for he had been told to run the gamut of the long trail of sixty miles and give the warning that the brave men of the Cowboys' League were wanted at the rallying place.

Through the darkness the boy sped. Untiring, unflinching, unswerving from the course he knew so well that he did not hesitate in the darkness.

Here glimmered a light that marked a ranch; there gleamed a halo that marked a cowboy camp-fire.

And louder rang the bugle notes, like a phantom the messenger sped by.

Men called to him as they beheld the shadowy forms of horse and rider; but the only answer was the warning alarm of his bugle.

It seemed to speak the very words:

"Come one, come all!

"Men of iron are wanted!

"Come! Come! Come!"

Did any of the Cowboys' Secret League refuse to obey the signal?

Not one!

From every side, alone, in twos, in groups, men went riding to the rendezvous.

No Indians had raided recently; no

trails of the red marauders had been detected near the ranches; no Mexican raiders had been reported as forming to cross the Rio Grande and make a foray into Texas territory.

What, then, could the Boy Bugler's wild alarm mean?

No one could answer.

On, on, through the darkness rode the Boy Bugler of the Cowboys' Secret League—on until the notes echoed among the canyons of the foot hills and then died away in the depths of the mountains far away like the last cry of a doomed soul.

The Boy Bugler had done his duty. He had sounded the tocsin among the ranchers of plain and hill, and it only remained for the cowboys of the league to obey the signal, the warning, the summons.

### CHAPTER II.

#### THE COWBOYS' SECRET LEAGUE.

The "Cowboys of the Gulf," they were called, and among them were many members of the Secret League.

They were banded together as good men and true, and even the life of one was at the disposal of the others should the demand be made.

They were first leagued against common foes, the Indians and the Mexican raiders, and men spoke of them as the Cowboy Vigilantes, for they had visited severe justice upon outlaws where punishment was due.

It was a secret banding together of men of mettle.

They were unknown as solitary members of the league, only those who belonged understanding how to tell a comrade by grip, sign or word.

Bold, dashing fellows all of them, they would make an invading army that knew not defeat, and they could be depended upon to the bitter end.

Amid the wild and picturesque scenery back from the Rio Grande was their secret retreat, where a couple of men as sentinels were on duty, ever to await a call from their captain, or an alarm from any member who felt that there was cause to sound the tocsin of war.

The retreat was upon a mountain top, a valley there, small, beautiful, well timbered and with a lake of purest water in the centre.

The grass grew luxuriously there; the water was never dried up; wood was plentiful; so it was the very spot for the secret retreat of the Cowboy League, where to meet in their monthly councils.

A large cabin was the council room, at which the sentinels remained ceaselessly on watch.

Upon the highest point a beacon was kept constantly ready to light, and when its rays shot forth over hill, plain and valley, it was a signal to the cowboys to gather.

With horse worn down by his long run, the Boy Bugler climbed the steep trail to the retreat just as the day dawned.

He made his way to the cabin, where the two guards were visible, one of them cooking the morning meal over a fire built in a rock chimney.

Stripping the saddle and bridle from his tired steed, the Boy Bugler turned him loose to feed, with half a dozen others, in the mountain-top valley, and throwing himself down upon the grass, he called out:

"Well, pard, I made the run in eight hours, and never skipped a ranch."

"Well done, Hotspur Harry, The Boy Bugler," cried one of the men, while the other said:

"I'll soon have breakfast ready, Harry, and I guess you need it."

"Indeed I do; but I'll take a plunge in the lake and freshen up."

Down to the lake he went, and, after a plunge, made his toilet and said he felt like a new man.

He attacked the breakfast with a right good will, and while the men lighted their pipes he again threw himself down to rest.

He was a handsome boy of sixteen, with well-knit form, and a face so dark, with eyes and hair of such ebon hue, it showed that he had Mexican blood in his veins.

His costume was half Mexican, half cowboy, for he wore his pants stuck in top boots, and upon his head was a silver-embroidered sombrero, while a red silk sash was about his slender waist.

To a clasp in his belt hung a beautiful silver cornet, rather than bugle, and few could play upon the instrument as could the young Hotspur.

The two sentinels were hardy looking Texans, and were dressed as cowboys and armed.

"You saw the captain, then, Hotspur?" asked one of the men.

"Oh, yes; when the messenger brought me that letter I went at once to him, and he told me, as I said he would, to sound the call."

"Good!"

"We heard your bugle long before you got here, and knew that the captain had decided to act," said one of the men, while the other remarked:

"I suppose the men will begin to drop in soon, Harry?"

"Yes, of course, though I did not speak to any one, I made my cornet do the talking, pard, and you bet the boys understand all it said!"

"Yes, and you can make it talk, my boy."

"But, have you got that letter with you, or did you leave it with the captain?"

"No, I have it."

"Would you mind reading it to us, for you only told us before you went away that your brother had been arrested by the Spaniards, thrown into prison and would surely be put to death?"

"That is just it, pard. Brother Rafael, though an American citizen, living on his plantation in Cuba, has had his home destroyed by Spanish soldiers, and he is in irons and a prisoner. His Cuban wife is also under guard, and she, too, may be made to suffer, as she is in the power of a Spanish officer, whom she had refused to marry."

"Then, too, my sister Lucita, has mysteriously disappeared, and what her fate is no one knows."

"But, I will read you the letter."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CUBAN EXILES.

When the "Ten Years' War," as the Cuban struggle for independence from "68" to "78" is called, came to an end with gloom to the patriots who had so bravely fought, so terribly suffered, a distinguished leader of the insurgent forces, accepting the pardon and promises of Spain for what they were worth, gathered together a remnant of his once grand fortune, and sought a home in the hospitable land of the United States.

His wife had died of a broken heart to find a resting place in the ever faithful isle, and he had with him to seek a home



in America his only child, a handsome youth, who, though a boy in years, was a veteran soldier, for from the time he had entered his teens he had followed his father in the hard-fought fight to free Cuba.

Locating upon a ranch in Texas, prosperity soon came to the old soldier and his son, and amid pleasant surroundings and with new associations he seemed content to remain and forget the sanguinary warfare through which he had passed.

He soon won the heart of a fair daughter of the Lone Star State, and as a daughter and son were the fruits of this union, the old patriot was a happy man.

His Cuban-born son by his first wife had been sent North to be educated, and he became an American citizen by adoption, as also did his father.

But, while in New York the son, Rafael Agramonte, had his thoughts again turn to Cuba through meeting there a beautiful girl, who was also being educated in America.

She was hardly more than in her teens, but Rafael Agramonte had secretly vowed to one day in the future return to Cuba and claim Stella Aguilar for his wife.

But, misfortune still dogged those of the Agramonte name, for the Indians raided the ranch of the old Cuban-American, and, in defending his wife and children, he was slain.

His second son, Harry Agramonte, though a boy of but thirteen, avenged his father then and there, and his pluck kept the redskins at bay until the arrival of the cowboys, who put them to flight.

Harry Agramonte, however, had thus saved his mother, his sister Lucita, two years his senior, and his own life, and became a young hero, and the idol of the Cowboy Clan.

Back to his Texan home came Rafael Agramonte to find it in ruins, the cattle run off, his father dead.

His stepmother and half brother and sister were encamped amid the ruins, for Mrs. Agramonte had been made desperately ill by the shock and her life was despaired of.

For weeks she lingered, to then fade out of life and be placed by the side of her soldier husband.

With his fortune wiped out, Rafael Agramonte did not return North, but remained to save what he could from the wreck.

His young sister, Lucita, was, however, sent to New York, and placed in the same boarding school with Stella Aguilar, only a year her senior.

Then Rafael Agramonte organized the Cowboys' Secret League to protect the border ranchmen.

He was made captain by unanimous vote, and a young Texan ranchman, Charlie Chase, a dashing, handsome, whole-souled fellow, became the second in command, while Harry Agramonte was made courier and bugler, for his elder brother found it next to impossible to get the boy to go North to school, though he did consent to study under a private tutor "to finish off the education necessary for a young cowboy," as Harry expressed it.

Thus time passed, and after a couple of years Rafael Agramonte, the cowboy captain, had brought order out of chaos, his home had been rebuilt, though in a more humble manner, and once more he had cattle by the hundreds roaming the prairies.

The Cowboys' Secret League had come to stay, and the good it accomplished all admitted, though there were some who considered it a dangerous membership, as it was a secret order with an unlimited power.

Several times, as he again began to prosper, had Rafael Agramonte gone to New York to visit his sister, he said, and in truth, too, but there was another claimant there upon his affection—the Cuban beauty, Stella Aguilar.

At last the education of Stella was finished, and ere she returned to her home in Cuba she went to Texas to visit Lucita Agramonte, in every way her equal in beauty of face and form.

When the two lovely girls arrived in Texas they created sad havoc with the hearts of the young ranchmen, and all felt that it looked as though the fair Cuban would love and wed a Mexican ranchman, who made his home in America, and was said to be very rich.

Don Ruiz Valdos was his name, and when Stella Aguilar left for Cuba, the promised wife of Rafael Agramonte, many said that the Mexican Don would never forgive or forget that his love had been refused.

Back to her New York school went Lucita, for she had another year to complete her education, and by the time it was ended Rafael Agramonte had his ranch in prosperous condition, so that he could leave it indefinitely.

At last he started North, and, to the surprise of all, Harry Agramonte, the Boy Bugler of the Secret League, accompanied him.

But the secret soon came out, for the two brothers and sister sailed for Cuba, and there Rafael Agramonte made Stella Aguilar his wife.

Lucita was to make her home with them, and for half a year did Hotspur Harry, as the cowboys called him, remain in Cuba.

Then he returned to his Texas ranch, and under the guardianship of Captain Charlie Chase, for he had been promoted, the youth once more resumed his place as the Boy Bugler of the Cowboy Secret League.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE CLAN.

Though its founder and first chief had sought a wife in the ever faithful isle, and returned to the land of his birth to dwell, the Secret League of Cowboys still remained as a power in the land for good, under its former lieutenant, Charlie Chase, promoted to captain.

Captain Chase, few knew much about, save that he had been a midshipman in the United States Navy, but had been dismissed when he had attained the rank of ensign for fighting a duel in Vera Cruz, in which he killed a Spanish lieutenant for some cause of quarrel unknown.

After his dismissal he had entered the Mexican Navy as the commander of a coast revenue patrol vessel, and after two years of service had resigned his commission, gone to Texas, and, having a few thousand of dollars at his command, had become a Texas ranchman, in which he had met with great success.

Between Charlie Chase, the ex-naval officer, and the Cuban patriot of the Ten Years' War a devoted friendship existed, their ranches being not far apart.

A stronger bond, too, than the friendship of men, it was said, was the love the young Texan had for Lucita Agra-

monte, and who, rumor had it, returned his affection.

Whether this was true or not, "Captain Charlie," as the cowboys familiarly termed him, went to Cuba as Rafael Agramonte's "best man," when the latter married Stella Aguilar, and was very willing, upon his return to Texas, to take the management of the Agramonte ranch and guardianship of Hotspur Harry, the Boy Bugler.

Having been a naval officer, and had experience as a commander, Captain Chase was well fitted for the position of chief of the Cowboy Clan.

Enough was known of his life to feel that he was the man to lead them. Daring to recklessness, quick to act, thorough in discipline, courteous and kind to all, he was fairly idolized by the wild element which comprised his command.

If there was a man in the Secret Clan who did not like Charlie Chase, it was Don Ruiz Valdos, for he, too, was one of the Cowboy League, which numbered employer and employe alike.

The men sworn into the league were no ordinary individuals. Simply being a cowboy or a rancher did not admit them. They were picked men, and were selected for honesty, truth and bravery.

There were no desperadoes or "toughs" in the clan—not one upon whom rested the shadow of a crime that was known.

Man-killers many of them were, but it was known that the one who had taken the life of a fellow-being had right on his side.

Wild, reckless fellows many of them were, but they were true as steel to themselves and to their comrades. They were bound together in the clan by an oath that was death to break.

How many there were in the Secret League, no one outside of the clan could tell. Some had it that there were several hundreds, others that there were but half a hundred. Just how many there were, and who they were, was, as said, the league's own secret.\*

Such was the Cowboys' Secret Clan, from the time of its organization by Rafael Agramonte up to the day when it is presented to the reader under the leadership of Captain Charlie Chase, the ex-naval officer, transformed into a Texan rancher.

Dwelling alone upon his ranch and with Captain Charlie to manage for him, Harry Agramonte had considerable leisure upon his hands; consequently he was the one selected as courier, in addition to his duties as Boy Bugler, to visit the secret retreat in the mountains each week with orders, and for the reports of the cowboy scouts.

It was when going there on such duty that a special courier had been sent after him with a letter for him, which had been marked "most important."

The letter bore the postmark of a Florida port, and had evidently been brought there by some one landing from the Havana steamer.

Anxious about his brother and sister, for the present patriot struggle had begun, Hotspur Harry had broken the seal, glanced at its contents and calling to the two cowboy sentinels on duty in the retreat that he was going to see the captain, was away at full speed.

The return by night and the wild, weird call of his bugle for the clan to assemble is known.

\*Being in the secret of the Cowboy's Secret Clan, I will state that the band aimed to keep the number at an even hundred.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE LETTER FROM CUBA.

"This letter," said Hotspur Harry, taking the missive from his pocket as he spoke, "is from the overseer of the plantation, and was sent to Florida to be mailed there, for Spanish officers allow no mail from inland to go through unopened."

The two cowboy sentinels had drawn closer to the youth to hear the letter read, for both were deeply interested in the cause of their former captain, Rafael Agramonte, and were anxious to know his fate.

They had heard of the breaking out in Cuba of another struggle for independence, and remembering that the father of their Boy Bugler had been a distinguished patriot, while his brother Rafael, then a youth, had also been a soldier of the Lone Star flag, they had expected him to again espouse the cause of "Cuba Libre."

"This letter," continued Harry, "is dated just two weeks ago, and was written at the plantation. It says:

"I am more than pained to inform you of sad news, but deem it my duty to at once acquaint you with all that has happened here.

"You know, of course, how bitter has been the feeling here since the breaking out of this war, and your brother, having been a patriot in the last struggle, has been under suspicion continually, and also has been closely watched.

"He has been guilty of no act, as far as I know, to cause the Spaniards to pounce down upon him; but this they did do, coming to the plantation in the night and under the leadership of Major Blanco Bartolo, whom you know was an old suitor for the hand of Senor Rafael Agramonte's wife.

"Angered by the actions of the Spaniards, the Senor Rafael resented their conduct toward his wife and sister, and was attacked by a captain, whom he promptly shot dead, though wholly in self-defense.

"This was just the excuse Major Bartolo wished, for your brother was made a prisoner and carried off to the mountain fortress, which you remember is an old Spanish garrison.

"The Senora Agramonte is now under guard in the villa, and your sister, the Senorita Lucita, as an American suspect, was taken with her brother.

"But, this is not known as a certainty, only supposed to be the case.

"I was not arrested, as my Cuban name spared me, yet I am shadowed I know, and sent this letter with fear and trembling.

"The villa has been robbed of all that it contained of value; the stock has been driven off of the plantation; a number of the people were killed and the rest made prisoners, and thus death and ruin remain where, a short while ago, all was comfort and contentment.

"I hope that you, as an American, and your brother and sister, also being citizens of that great and powerful country, can secure the hearing of your Government, and at once get their release.

"It is needless to tell you that your brother is in great danger, for he may be tried and shot, for you have no idea how terrible is Spanish hate, and if they make a mark for persecution, death is almost sure to follow.

"I will do all I can to get all the information possible about your brother—just where he is, and also learn if

your sister has been taken to the mountain fortress.

"This I will hold for the United States Consul, whom you will doubtless influence to act promptly in the matter; for certainly it is one of the basest of outrages ever yet perpetrated by the Spanish authorities.

"If you only had a hundred of those gallant mounted Texans here of whom you have told me so much, and whom your brother used to command, you could carry that fortress, rescue the Senor Rafael and the Senorita Lucita, and punish the cruel Spaniards for their infamous work.

"But, I must contain my soul in peace until you act through the United States Consul, for nothing else will save those you love from Spanish hatred and tyranny.

"Remember, I will have all the proof for the Consul, but he must be ready to protect me, too, for, though my mother was an American, and I was born in the United States, my father was a Spaniard, and, though sparing me now, it will not be safe for me when it is known what I have done.

"I shall either have to join Gomez or Maceo, or be protected by the American Consul; so please explain this, my young friend Harry.

"I often think of your six months' stay here, with your brother, and what good friends we were, recalling our many rides, hunts, and how I taught you to become a first-class sailor boy in Senor Rafael's yacht.

"My kindest regards to Captain Charlie, whom I took a great fancy to when here, and tell him I wish he had his Cowboy Clan in Cuba, for you told me he took command after your brother left.

"But, oh! To see the once beautiful home now! It would almost break your young heart.

"But, I must close now, as I send this by private hand to mail in the United States.

"Hoping soon to hear good news,

"Sincerely your friend,

"VANCE MENDOZA,

"The Overseer,

"Wild Flower Plantation."

"There, pard, you have heard the letter, just as Mendoza wrote it, and it was his wish about our Cowboy Clan being in Cuba to rescue my brother and sister that caused Captain Charlie to send me on the ride to sound the midnight alarm," said Hotspur Harry, when he had finished reading the letter.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A TORMENTOR PUNISHED.

The Boy Bugler, having read his letter, lay back upon the grass, his head resting upon his saddle, and tired nature asserting itself, he dropped off into a deep sleep.

The two cowboys talked in whispers, not to awaken him, and then, remembering that the clan would begin to arrive soon, and naturally be ready for breakfast, they began to make preparations to feed the hungry.

Provisions were plentiful, for the retreat was always stocked with supplies to draw upon for a long trail, if necessary, of the Cowboy League, and a fine deer having been killed the night before, all was at hand for the men as they should arrive.

A couple of hours passed, and then a single horseman was seen advancing up the steep trail.

The boy still slept on, and, determined not to have him awakened, the two guards met the solitary comer some distance away from the camp.

"Ho, pard, what's all this alarm about?" asked the new arrival, speaking with a decided accent and which, with his swarthy complexion, black eyes and hair, showed him to be a Mexican.

"Some trouble the captain knows of, Jose Cara; but don't make a racket, for the Boy Bugler is asleep after his long night ride."

"I wish he'd been asleep last night instead of disturbing honest men," growled the Mexican cowboy.

"Why, you don't object to the call, do you, when there is need, Jose?"

"No, when there is need; but I've just come in from a scout and there is not a sign of redskins or raiders anywhere."

"The captain has some special reason, this time."

"What is it?"

"He will tell you."

"Where is he?"

"He has not arrived."

"Who is here?"

"Save the Boy Bugler, no one else except you."

"I believe it's some deviltry of that boy, calling us here."

"He is a wild one, I admit, but he would not dare to give a false alarm."

"He'd dare anything, he's so spoilt. Why, you men make fools of yourselves about that kid."

"Don't you like him, Jose?"

"Not a little bit."

"What have you got against him?"

"Nothing; only he's too fresh."

"No one else sees him as you do."

"Well, I'm here, and first to obey the call; but I want to know why the alarm was given."

"The captain will tell you when he comes."

"I'll ask the boy."

"Don't wake him up, Jose Cara."

"No, let the boy sleep," urged the other guard.

They had walked up to the camp now, and Harry Agramonte still lay fast asleep.

"He looks too comfortable. I'll have to rouse him for fun," said the Mexican.

"Don't you do it, Jose."

"Yes, I will; I want to know what he knows."

"It's a shame, for you will hear all you wish only too soon."

"I'll just touch him with my spur," and the Mexican stepped forward, raised his foot and pricked the youth on the hand with his sharp spur.

The foot of the tormentor was quickly seized, and, leaping to his feet, Hotspur Harry dealt a blow straight from the shoulder, and the Mexican got it full in the face.

Backward and heavily downward Jose Cara went, while the two sentinels burst out in hearty laughter.

"Don't wake a man too suddenly, Jose Cara, especially when he is having a nightmare," said the boy.

"Caramba! I'll let you feel the weight of my fist for that, boy," and the Mexican, with his nose bleeding from the blow, sprung to his feet and started toward the boy.

"Hold on, there, Jose Cara! You provoked the trouble, and shall not harm him," cried one of the sentinels, the other remarking:

"Yes, he served you right."

"Oh, let him come on, for I don't mind a little scrimmage—hold on! If



you draw a weapon I'll kill you, Jose Cara," cried the youth, and his revolver was in his hand before the Mexican got his weapon out of its holster.

The Mexican hesitated, for he saw at a glance that the two sentinels would stand no nonsense.

"All right, kid. I'll just thrash you with my fists," he called out, now in his ugliest mood.

"Throw off your belt, then."

The two quickly laid aside their weapons, and the Mexican ran upon the youth, but only to be knocked down again. He arose, but once more he dropped.

"Come, Jose, lets play quits, for I can do this all day," declared Harry, cheerfully.

"All right, kid; quits it is," and the Mexican offered his hand.

But there was a vengeful look in his eyes, as he turned away, and one of the sentinels whispered:

"Quits don't go with him. You'll have to watch him, Hotspur."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE GATHERING OF THE COWBOY CLAN.

Jose Cara went to the lake to wash the blood from his face, and try to subdue the swelling caused by the stinging blows of his young adversary's fists.

He had known that the youth was as pliable as whalebone, quick and strong beyond his years; but he had not suspected that he could master him, a man, and one who prided himself upon his strength.

That he had no right to disturb the sleeper he knew, and his punishment was just; but, Jose came of a race that neither forgives nor forgets easily.

Others were in sight now, coming to the rendezvous, and Jose only hoped nothing would be said about the affair.

"I awakened," Harry explained to the guards, "as you came near, but I wanted to see if he would be mean enough to rouse me, and, as he was that mean, I let him have it."

"But I have never liked Jose Cara."

"Well, watch him, boy pard; he's ugly as they make 'em. But, I say, Hotspur, how you can use your fists!"

"My brother taught me, for he is an expert in putting up his fists."

"And you can handle a sword, too."

"Oh, yes; for I took lessons from father, when a little chap, and then from brother Rafael and Captain Charlie."

"And you are no slouch as a revolver and rifle shot, Harry."

"I generally manage to hit what I aim at."

"And can throw a lariat with the best of us."

"Yes, I can throw a rope; but, say, pards, what are my accomplishments being rehearsed for? I have no flask with me—don't drink, you know," and the two men laughed.

"Well, the men are beginning to drop into camp now, and Jose Cara is still at the lake trying to make himself presentable," and the three now turned to the cowboys who were now riding into the retreat.

As he looked from the hilltop over the trails, Hotspur Harry could see many horsemen on their way to the rallying place, and among them he recognized Captain Charlie Chase, the chief of the clan.

"They will all be here in force by noon," he muttered to himself, and added: "I am sure Captain Chase will

decide upon some step to save my brother and sister. I am willing to go to Cuba if I can be of any service, Heaven knows."

"But, I am sure that Captain Charlie will do what is right," and the Boy Bugler turned to greet the party who just then rode up, giving him a cheer as they did so.

The Boy Bugler had called the Cowboy Clan to the rendezvous a number of times in the last few years, yet never in such haste, and at night, and all who had seen him flit by like a spectre of the darkness, his bugle ringing the wild alarm, were loud in his praise as they rode up to the gathering place.

About half a hundred of the band had arrived, when, alone, came a horseman, upon whom all eyes turned as he approached.

He was splendidly mounted upon a black horse, and all his outfit was Mexican, save his weapons.

The bridle, saddle and spurs were worth a small fortune, and his dress was elegant and costly.

It was "Captain Charlie," the then chief of the Cowboy Clan.

He was a man of fine physique, sat his horse like a born rider, and his face was sure to fascinate a woman and command a man's admiration at a glance.

There was a certain daring, stern look about the mouth, a piercing character-reading expression in the eyes; but his manner was cheery, his bearing that of a soldier and very courteous.

He raised his gold-embroidered sombrero at the rousing salute given him, and said pleasantly:

"Thank you, men! You are prompt, and the others are coming in rapidly, I see."

Then he turned to the youth and continued:

"Well, Hotspur, you never deserved your name better than last night, for you rode that trail with a vengeance, and your bugle seemed to have been kept to your lips on all the run."

"I didn't lose much time, sir, and I kept the horn a singing," was the answer.

"And with good result."

"But, let us get breakfast over, and then to work, for it is the most important event of our lives that brings us together this time."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE SECRET MADE KNOWN.

The cowboys soon had breakfast over with, and were all gathered under the pines near the cabin.

One and all were anxious to learn the cause of the urgent call.

The whole number had gathered there, save several who were accounted for by illness or other reasons that prevented their coming.

"Where is Don Ruiz Valdés, Jose Cara?" asked the chief, as he missed the handsome face and elegant form of the Americanized Mexican cattle king, for he was so called as the richest rancher in those parts.

Jose was his chief cowboy, and answered:

"He went across the Rio Grande on business, señor captain."

"I am sorry, for I needed him."

"He may be on hand when wanted, sir, if the move it not made to-day."

"I will see him at his ranch, then; but have you had a fall from your horse?" and the chief gazed at the bruised and swollen face, which the cowboy in vain tried to hide.

"I had a fall, señor," was the reply, with a quick glance at the Boy Bugler and the two sentinels.

But, Hotspur seemed not to know what was said, while the two sentinels smiled at the reply of Jose.

"Well, men, as you are all assembled, I will at once make known the reason for the urgent call," and Captain Charlie glanced over the crowd, seeming to look into the face of every man there.

"If I am right, no man has ever held the claim upon you," went on the captain, "that your first chief and founder had, Rafael Agramonte."

A cheer greeted the name, but a voice cried:

"You have filled his place so well, captain, that we could not miss him."

Another cheer greeted this.

"I thank you; but once a member of our clan, always a member, until death takes us away, and I consider that Rafael Agramonte is still one of us."

"At present he is in trouble, for I wish to read to you a letter received from Cuba by our Boy Bugler."

Taking the letter the reader has already heard read, the captain continued:

"Now, that Rafael Agramonte married a Cuban lady and settled upon her plantation in Cuba you all know, as well as that I accompanied him there, remaining a few weeks, while Hotspur Harry stayed for half a year, and his sister Lucita made her home there."

"This letter is to Hotspur Harry from the overseer of the once beautiful plantation home known as the Wild Flower Villa."

"It will tell you all the sad story, and perhaps give you a hint of what my intentions are in the matter."

"If not, I shall now make them very plain, and I feel that I will receive your support, for that is what I wish most devoutly."

Then, amid a breathless silence the letter of the Cuban overseer was read by Charlie Chase to the Cowboy Clan.

Hardly had the last words been uttered when the crowd, taking the hint of what was wanted, gave a roar of fury and then came the words:

"Rescue them! Rescue them!"

"I see, my comrades, that you grasp my meaning, and as you have not thought upon this subject, but acted from impulse, I who have considered it as I came here, wish to say that the patriot army of Cubans are struggling hard now by day and by night to wrest their island from Spanish control."

"They are being made to suffer untold misery, hardships and horrors."

"But from America they are getting what help they can, and each week vessels are leaving our ports carrying them arms and supplies."

"Now, our fight is with Spain only so far as her soldiers have swooped down upon American citizens and hold our former chief and his sister as prisoners; yes, his beautiful wife also, for she is kept under guard in her own home."

"Having been there, I know something of the surroundings."

"Rescue them!" yelled the cowboys.

"The Wild Flower Villa Plantation is upon the coast, and there is a small harbor there, into which flows a navigable stream."

"The fortress referred to in this letter is five leagues inland, on a lofty hill, and twelve miles from the villa proper."

"The roads are good from the coast to the fortress, much of the way is timbered, and I know that an expedition can



be landed there at night, a dash made for the stronghold, and, rescuing your former chief and his sister, we can return to the ship, rescue the Senora Agramonte and escape with them."

"Rescue them!" yelled the cowboys.

"If we do not do this, Rafael Agramonte will be put to death, and what fate awaits the others Heaven only knows."

"We will rescue them!"

"Lead the way, captain, and we are with you," cried the cowboys, now in a state of wild excitement.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER.

Captain Chase had expected to have to call for volunteers, to pick his men for an expedition of such daring as the invasion of Cuba by a clan of Texan cowboys, and was a little surprised to find how determined the men were to enter into his bold plan to rescue Rafael Agramonte and those dear to him.

The question would be to prevent all from going.

Seeing that he had more to say, the men at once became as still as death, and then followed:

"I feel, comrades, that I can call upon each and every one of you, upon all of our clan, to go with me.

"But what we do must be done with perfect system, the greatest secrecy, and admit of no failure.

"Remember, our Government is at peace with Spain, and hence we have, as American citizens, no real right to invade Spanish territory.

"We make the right, but we would be arrested did the whisper of our intention get abroad, so not a man must utter a word about it."

"Let the man die who does," said a voice, and the sentiment was greeted with cheers.

"To go there, a steamer must be chartered, and, clearing from some port, she must make a landing at some secret rendezvous on our coast—I know the very spot well—and take us on board.

"We must carry our horses and a few extra animals, while we will take a couple of Gatling guns for use when needed.

"We will carry repeating rifles, a couple to each man, our revolvers, and sabers, for all of you know how to use blades, with several exceptions.

"But we must go prepared for desperate work.

"We can quickly make the run to Cuba, land, secure the victims of Spanish hate, with any others that we may find there, and retreat to our ship in one night, I feel sure.

"The cost will be considerable, but I will subscribe to half the amount—"

"We'll pay the rest!" came a roar from the cowboys, while the Boy Bugler said:

"My inheritance is at stake for all, Captain Chase."

"No, no, no!"

"Not a dollar does the Boy Bugler pay!"

"We stand the expense!"

Such were the cries, and it was at once seen that the ten thousand dollars, or more, cost, would be promptly met by the clan, who were now heart and soul in the enterprise.

This being settled, the captain continued:

"There is a first important duty to perform, and that is to send a courier ahead to prepare the way, learn the ex-

act situation and arrange signals for us in the steamer to know just where to run in and make our landing."

"That is my duty, sir, for I know the land there," said Hotspur Harry.

To the surprise of many, Captain Chase said:

"Yes, Harry, you are right, for in the six months you spent there you learned the surroundings well, the letter of Vance Mendoza was to you, and, your father being a Cuban, you speak perfect Spanish.

"You can go, and we will arrange upon a plan as we return to the ranch.

"After giving you so much time, we will start, and then for the rescue of Rafael Agramonte and those dear to him.

"I will accompany you, Hotspur Harry, as far as Galveston, and on to New Orleans, if necessary, to get a steamer, for we dare not depend upon a sailing vessel.

"The steamer can go to the rendezvous I have in view on the coast, and be there at a certain time, and the cowboys clan will be there in the saddle ready to meet her, and we will know no such word as fail, men."

The shout that greeted this was proof that there should be no failure.

Then out of the number eighty good men and true were selected and told to meet at a certain point ten days from then and ready for the expedition, each man well mounted, armed as directed, and with the amount of his subscription to the fund in hand.

All promised, and were eager for the start, while the few not selected seemed downcast at their failure to be of the party, yet realized that all could not go, some must remain.

But there was one who was not selected who looked very black over the captain's refusal to take him, especially when he was told to relieve the two sentinels at the Retreat and remain there alone in charge.

This one was Jose Cara.

He pleaded an important duty to perform for his employer, Don Ruiz Valdés.

"I will see the Don," had said Captain Chase.

Then he said he was suffering from his "fall" and must see the physician at the Don's Ranch.

But all to no avail, for he was told to remain.

He walked off in sullen mood, and half an hour after, when the cowboys assembled for dinner, preparatory to starting on the return, he came back, an ugly light in his eyes.

"Jose Cara gave a package to Mexican Pablo, captain; better see what it is," whispered the Boy Bugler.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DEMAND.

At the whispered suggestion of the Boy Bugler Captain Chase started as though he had been struck a blow.

Could it be that the package handed to Mexican Pablo could mean any treachery?

A word would be sufficient to ruin all, he well knew.

It was a delicate matter to charge a man, one of the trusted clan, with false dealings, and yet it would be fatal to let that package go if treachery was intended.

Captain Chase had never liked Jose Cara, and he had always regarded Mexican Pablo as one to keep an eye upon.

The two were devoted friends, and

Jose was on the ranch of Don Ruiz Valdés. Mexican Pablo was a cowboy in the employ of the Boy Bugler, or, rather, Captain Chase, as the youth's guardian.

The cowboys' captain pretended not to do so, but kept his eye upon the two men while at dinner.

He saw that Jose Cara ate nothing and several times whispered to his pard, Mexican Pablo.

At last, when all were about ready to start, the cowboys' chief called out:

"Hold on a minute, men!"

All eyes were at once turned upon him.

"I wish to say a few words that pain me to give expression to, and if I am wrong I will do all in my power to make amends.

"If I am right, I will leave the matter for the clan to act upon.

Every eye was turned upon the chief.

What could his words mean?

Continuing, he said:

"Of course, there were disappointments in that some could not go on this secret expedition to the Island of Cuba to rescue Rafael Agramonte; but then those who remained were the ones that duty called on strongest to do so, as I supposed.

"All accepted their fate who had to stay, with the resignation befitting our members—with one exception."

This caused the cowboys to glance uneasily from one to the other.

"That one was sullen at not having been one of the chosen band, and more, he showed an ugly spirit in having to remain here as sentinel.

"I refer to Jose Cara."

"I wanted to go, senior captain, yes, and to remain here I must neglect the work of my employer, Don Ruiz."

"Suppose we had gone on the Indian trail?"

"That would have been different."

"In what respect?"

The man was silent.

Turning quickly to the man who had been handed the package reported by the Boy Bugler, Captain Chase said sternly:

"Mexican Pablo, give me that package handed to you by Jose Cara half an hour ago!"

Mexican Pablo uttered an exclamation of surprise, while Jose Cara's bruised face became very white.

"I have no package, senior captain."

"Hand me that letter, or I will shoot you in your tracks, sir!"

The voice of the cowboy captain was determined, and his revolver covered Mexican Pablo.

The man glanced appealingly at Jose Cara, who started toward him, calling out:

"It is my letter to my employer.

"Your being chief of the Cowboy Clan gives you no right to demand it—"

But the man stopped short, for the revolver of the Boy Bugler covered him, and he heard the words:

"Halt, Jose Cara!"

"The captain wants the letter, and he'll get it."

All was breathless attention now, and suppressed excitement.

This was a new departure for the Cowboy Clan to have trouble in their ranks.

Could it be that there were traitors among them?

If so, the chief was in a fair way to show them up.

Hence all awaited the result of the cowboy captain's demand.

Mexican Pablo looked appealingly at his pard, Jose Cara.



The latter looked defiant, but was under the muzzle of the Boy Bugler's revolver.

He knew well that Hotspur Harry had a nerve of iron and a deadly aim.

He felt that the matter could not be gone through with by bravado or force. It must be compromised.

So he said in a deprecating tone:

"Why, captain, there is a great fuss made over nothing.

"I was in an ugly humor because I could not go, I admit; but then it was over with, and I wrote a letter to the Don, asking him to get you to relieve me here and let me go.

"Then there was the report of some business I did for him, and that is what I gave to Mexican Pablo to deliver.

"If you wish to see it you can."

This explanation seemed satisfactory to all—save two.

The captain and the Boy Bugler were not satisfied, and Mexican Pablo gazed in open-mouthed wonder at his pard.

"I do wish to see it," said the cowboy captain.

## CHAPTER XI.

### UNDER COVER OF A REVOLVER.

The look that Pablo, the Mexican, turned upon his pard, Jose Cara, seemed to be full of horror.

He had an expression upon his face as though Jose Cara had suddenly gone mad.

This the cowboys could not fail to observe.

Then, too, the reply of the captain that he did wish to see that letter was a surprise.

There was one thing certain, and that was that Captain Chase and the Boy Bugler either knew just what they were about, or they were making a very great mistake.

Which was it?

This query was upon every lip.

All eyes were now turned upon Jose Cara.

What would he do? Why, of course, tell Mexican Pablo to hand over the package he had in his keeping.

That would straighten matters out.

But that was just what Jose Cara did not do.

His face turned a gray hue once more, and he said:

"I made the offer, Captain Chase, but I don't see what right you have to read a letter from me to my employer?"

This looked like a backdown.

They were at least bold words.

Men of that clan never disputed the will of their chief.

The eyes now turned upon the cowboy captain.

His face was calm, his words even as he said:

"My reason is a good one, Jose Cara."

"What is it?"

"I doubt your explanation of what the contents of that package are!"

"I will swear to it, senor, that I tell the truth."

"Your word to me is equal to your oath."

"How do you mean?"

"I would take neither!"

"Ho, pards!"

"Do you mean that?"

"Do the laws of our clan give a chief a right to insult his men?"

"See here, Jose Cara, your appealing to the men does not help you, for all heard my words just uttered, that I was willing, if necessary, to make any repa-

ration, and I will now add that I will hold myself personally responsible to you."

"That settles it!" cried one, and to this sentiment there was not a dissenting voice.

"I will not let you see a private correspondence between my employer and myself," doggedly said the man.

"How can you prevent it?"

"You have no right to detain me here, so I will go myself to the Don, telling him all, and Mexican Pablo will go with me."

"You will go to the grave if you attempt to leave this spot without my will."

"Hold to that package, Pablo!" yelled Jose Cara.

But again he was covered by the revolver of the Boy Bugler, who called out:

"Move an inch, Jose Cara, and I fire!"

The situation now turned upon the flank of the threatened man.

Captain Chase again covered Mexican Pablo, and sternly ordered:

"Bring me that package, sir!"

"Destroy it!" shouted Jose Cara, yet not daring to move.

"Do it and you destroy yourself!" said the cowboy captain.

Mexican Pablo was quivering with fear. He knew not what to do.

While he hesitated again came the stern command:

"Obey me, sir!"

The man dared not look at Jose Cara. But he said appealingly: "I've got to, Pard Jose."

"My life is dear to me, and I know the captain means what he says."

"I most certainly do, Mexican Pablo."

"Obey your chief!" came in a deep growl from half a hundred voices.

Mexican Pablo then stepped slowly forward toward the chief.

Jose Cara eyed him as though he would spring upon him.

But Jose Cara did not move.

Reaching the chief, the Mexican took out the package.

It was a closely sealed envelope and quite bulky.

The captain took it and glanced at it critically.

There was no address whatever upon it.

"This is not addressed, Jose Cara."

"Mexican Pablo was told to give it to the Don."

"It is for him from me."

"Don't you dare open it."

The answer to this was the sudden tearing open of the envelope by the captain.

Jose Cara uttered a howl of rage.

The Boy Bugler's revolver, covering him, alone prevented his springing upon the cowboy captain in an endeavor to tear the package from his grasp.

Mexican Pablo muttered: "I had to do it, Jose."

"You have destroyed us both."

There was resignation in the words and look of the Mexican.

Then the cowboys' chief glanced at the contents of the envelope and said:

"You are right, Mexican Pablo. This will doom you both, or I am greatly mistaken."

## CHAPTER XII.

### A TRIAL BY JURY.

The cowboys' captain's face was very pale when he read over the papers he had taken from Mexican Pablo.

The latter, with Jose Cara, stood watching him, their eyes staring and faces livid.

Each man showed guilt, and also fear of the consequences.

They well knew how severe were the laws of the Cowboy Clan.

The eyes of the others were also upon their chief.

They waited for what he had to make known, looking like men who expected some dire revelation.

A score of the cowboys had now relieved Hotspur Harry of guard duty over Jose Cara and Mexican Pablo, by gathering about the two men with revolvers drawn.

At this Hotspur Harry had quietly disarmed the two men.

At last Captain Charlie broke the silence, that was becoming painful.

"Comrades, I have bad news for you," he began.

"For the first time in the history of our clan we have found that we had traitors in our midst.

"These two men are both of them traitors, for these papers betray them.

"This one is a letter to Don Ruiz Valdos, and it is as follows:

"Senor:

"A meeting of the clan was held today, not for service here, but in Cuba.

"News has come by letter from Vance Mendoza, the overseer of the Agramonte plantation in Cuba, to the effect that Rafael Agramonte has been arrested as a Cuban insurgent and thrown into the Del Monte Fortress, while his sister has been carried off, the senora being kept under guard in the villa.

"The letter was to Hotspur Harry, and Captain Charlie has determined to carry a shipload of cowboys to Cuba and rescue Agramonte and others.

"The Boy Bugler goes ahead to prepare the way.

"I write in haste and send this, by trusty Mexican Pablo, so you can be ready to go also, yet have time to send word ahead to our Spanish friends there to be prepared.

"I am to stay here on guard, but Mexican Pablo will go with the expedition.

"I can write no more, but if you can use your influence with the captain to relieve me of guard duty at the retreat, so I can go and be in at the wipe-out, thus claiming my share of the gold we will get, I shall be obliged.

"If not, of course you will see that I am not forgotten.

"From Captain Charlie, who will never suspect you, but wish your aid, you can get all plans in time to send to the captain general.

"In great haste.

"Jose Cara."

The silence that followed the reading of this letter was painful.

All eyes were upon the two traitors.

They stood with bowed heads and faces that were like the dead in hue.

"Comrades, this paper proves that Don Ruiz Valdos is a traitor also.

"There are three of them, and I know now that Don Ruiz, Jose Cara, and Mexican Pablo are Spaniards, not Mexicans.

"I suspected it before, but, as there was no reason to care whether they denied their nationality or not, I never spoke of my suspicions.

"But now, with Cuba as our objective point, and these letters to show that they are not Americans, as they claim, but Spaniards, their nationality is of vast importance, for upon it hang the lives of every man here before me.

"Comrades, you know our laws, so



select among yourselves your judge and jury to try these men for their lives.

"I leave them in your hands, and I need not remind you that we have but little time to lose."

These words of the chief were received in silence.

Each man was impressed with the gravity of the situation.

The one who became a member of the Cowboy Clan took upon himself vows that to break meant death.

The two prisoners were first bound, not a word escaping their white lips.

Then a low-voiced council was held among the cowboys, and in five minutes Captain Charlie had been chosen the judge, twelve men were selected as jurors, and the Boy Bugler was made the clerk, to take down the trial.

At once accepting the position, Captain Charlie took his seat before the cabin, and the Boy Bugler, with pencil and paper, sat near him.

The twelve jurors ranged themselves in front of the two prisoners.

All had their heads uncovered.

The judge then read the letter again, and asked if there were any witnesses who could offer any testimony against the prisoners from their own knowledge.

Several gave testimony that they had never believed in the sincerity of either Don Ruiz Valdós or the two prisoners then before them.

Others had been sure that the Don had never liked Captain Charlie, "for reasons that were known."

All knew that these "reasons" meant that the Don hated the captain as a successful rival for the hand of Senorita Agramonte.

Those asked to appear in favor of the prisoners failed to materialize.

Then the captain-judge read the laws of the clan, and left the fate of the two men in the hands of the jury.

The twelve men did not retire for secret conference.

There was no need to do so.

Their minds were already made up.

Their verdict was rendered:

"Guilty, and by the laws of the Cowboys Secret Clan their crime was punishable with death."

Then Captain Charlie, as judge, asked each man of the band to state his opinion of the verdict.

"Just!"

There was no dissenting voice.

Jose Cara and Mexican Pablo must die.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### WITHOUT MERCY.

There was no cheering, no loud approval as the verdict was announced.

The scene was too solemn for that.

It was the first trial among the Cowboys of the Clan of a serious nature.

For petty deeds they had been tried and received the punishment fitting the case.

But this was a trial of two of their number for treachery.

It was to be dealt with as the occasion demanded.

There was another guilty one, Don Ruiz Valdós.

He was to be dealt with in the future.

All knew that the captain would look after him, and at the proper time.

Many, however, wished that Ruiz Valdós was there then, believing it was dangerous to have a traitor at large.

But for the determination of Captain Charlie to take the Cowboy Clan to Cuba, to rescue their former captain

from death, neither Don Ruiz Valdós, Jose Cara, or Mexican Pablo might have ever been brought up as traitors to the league.

It was true that a number of the cowboys knew that the Don was both jealous and envious of Captain Charlie.

They knew that Don Ruiz was anxious to be the Chief of the Clan, and some even feared he might take his own way of becoming such.

But Captain Charlie had been warned, and they knew he could take care of himself.

What their leader would do in the matter of the Don's treachery they did not know.

Under other circumstances he would have been brought to the Retreat for trial.

But that could not then be, for time was precious.

Captain Charlie, when the verdict of the jury, and the Clan as well, was announced, at once called the convicted men before him to pronounce the sentence.

It was done in a few short, solemn words:

"Jose Cara and Mexican Pablo, you have been found guilty of treachery to your Commander of the Clan.

"By the laws of our Secret League, the punishment for treachery is death.

"You may be Spaniards born, but you are American citizens now, and it was your intention to betray to death your comrades.

"Your leader, Don Ruiz Valdós, shall not escape, nor shall he suspect that we know him to be a traitor until I am ready to act in his case.

"This paper, just found in the envelope and overlooked, is a note to you, Jose Cara, delivered by Mexican Pablo, and written by Don Ruiz.

"It says that he is aware of the arrest of Rafael Agramonte in Cuba, and that the calling of the Cowboy Clan doubtless means some foolhardy attempt to rescue him, and you are to report all that occurs to him with all promptness.

"This evidence alone would condemn you, had you not already been found guilty.

"Your sentence I now pronounce.

"It is that in just fifteen minutes you be shot to death with revolvers, in the hands of twelve men selected by lot as executioners, and may Heaven have mercy on your souls."

A loud "Amen!" followed the words of the cowboys' leader.

The Boy Bugler at once took from a bag in the cabin a number of marbles corresponding with the men present.

All but twelve were white.

These twelve were black.

Each man thrust his hand in the buckskin bag, and drawing out a marble stepped to one side as he held it up.

The twelve who got black balls were now in line, and Captain Charlie and the Boy Bugler were among them.

There were no exceptions in drawing for executioners.

The twelve men then faced the two who had to die.

All were armed with revolvers, and there were no blanks.

Each man must do his duty, and each man was a dead shot.

The captain was at one end of the line, the Boy Bugler at the other.

All were pale, stern and determined.

The two men were now the hue of death itself.

They were dazed with fright, and their lips were moving, as they muttered prayers for the rest of their souls.

Not a word of appeal, of pleading, did they utter.

They knew that their doom was just, by the laws of the Cowboy Clan; and they must meet it.

An appeal for mercy would fall upon deaf ears.

There they stood, unbound now, their heads bowed, their lips moving in murmured prayer.

Captain Chase gave the word:

"Ready, men!"

The twelve revolvers were brought to a level.

"Aim!"

Six revolvers at this covered each man.

"Fire!"

There were twelve flashes, twelve reports, and as many deadly bullets sped on their errand to kill.

The two traitors sunk in their tracks.

The aim of the executioners had been true.

Not a bullet had missed the heart it had been destined for.

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### WELL MET.

The execution was over, and justice had been vindicated in the Cowboy Clan by the execution of the traitors.

The bodies had been decently buried, and two men were selected to remain at the retreat as sentinels.

The rest began to wend their way to the respective ranches on which they belonged, and prepare for the strange and most perilous expedition of rescue to Cuba.

They all realized how deadly, indeed, it was, and that perhaps not one of them would ever return.

All knew that Spain was merciless to her foes.

They had all heard of the Virginius massacre, where many brave Americans had been shot down for aiding Cuba, while Cubans and even British subjects had shared the same fate.

What mercy could they expect when landing on the coast of Cuba, if they failed in their attempt to rescue Rafael Agramonte, his wife, and sister from Spanish hands?

So, by a score of trails they wended their way from the retreat to their homes.

Along the trail, side by side, rode the chief and the Boy Bugler.

Upon their shoulders rested the success or failure of the expedition.

The Boy Bugler, of his own will, had stood at the graves of the two traitors, and his bugle rose in the plaintive notes of

"Lights out!"

The men had stood with uncovered heads while the mournful notes rang out far and wide, a "rest in peace" for the dead, traitors though they were.

"Harry, that was a kind tribute of yours to the dead, sounding 'Lights Out,'" said Captain Charlie, as the two rode along together.

"It was all I could do, sir.

"Some one loved them, some one will mourn them dead," replied the boy.

"Yes, and their death will remain a mystery, for no secrets are told out of the Cowboys' Clan."

"No, sir.

"But what do you think of Don Ruiz's plot to have us all caught?"

"It was pure hatred and revenge.

"But did you see him?"

"Yes, sir, after showing you my letter from Vance Mendoza, I met him, and told him the sad news.

"He was lucky not to have gone to the



retreat, though he told me he would be there."

"He changed his mind, and put the work on Pablo and Jose, but his doom is sealed."

"If neither of his allies return, he may suspect something, sir."

"Harry, he must know nothing until we see him, for, before you go to Cuba, you must visit the ranch of Don Ruiz with me, and I will bring him to account for his treachery."

"You surely do not intend to meet him yourself, sir?"

"Yes, for his quarrel is with me, and his hatred and revenge directed at me."

"But, Captain Charlie, you risk your life in meeting a traitor, whom the clan should try and condemn."

"It is my quarrel, Harry, and because he knows that your sweet sister preferred me to him."

"I am now sure that he has been the one, or his hirelings, to twice try and assassinate me from ambush."

"Your sister refused him, your brother would not give his consent for him to be her suitor, and I was his successful rival, hence he hates us all most devoutly."

"Now, being really a Spaniard, he seeks to serve Spain and avenge himself upon us, through our determination to go to Cuba, and candidly I believe he is a Spanish spy, to prevent filibustering expeditions to sail from Texas to aid the Cubans."

"Yes, Harry, we will go to the Don's ranch, and he shall answer to me."

The ride was made to the Don's ranch, and the cowboy captain and Boy Bugler arrived late in the night, to find that the ranchero was away from home.

Continuing on their way, they went into camp upon the trail, for they were prepared for just such contingencies, and soon came to the humble home of one of the band.

The rancher was poor, lived alone, and was the herder of the small band of cattle and few ponies that he owned.

He was a most devoted friend of the Boy Bugler, whose father he had once worked for, and who had given him his start in life.

He also was very much attached to Captain Charlie, who had given him aid at various times.

As he was unable to leave his ranch alone, he had not gone to the retreat, and so explained why he had not obeyed the call of the Boy Bugler.

"I understood it, Dallas, so did not expect you," said the captain, and he added:

"Have you seen Don Ruiz Valdos pass here lately?"

"No, I seldom see him, captain, or any one else, for you know few people come by here, as I am so far off the trails," responded Dan Dallas, and hardly had he spoken when the Boy Bugler called out.

"There comes the Don now!"

And coming up the trail was a horseman, whom a glance was sufficient to show was indeed the Don.

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### TO FACE THE ORDEAL.

"We are fortunate, Harry, to meet him."

"Dallas, I may have to ask your services," said Captain Charlie, with the utmost coolness, as he saw Don Ruiz Valdos.

The latter was yet several hundred yards away, and coming along at a gallop.

His horse was a fine one, and gorgeously fitted out with a Mexican saddle and bridle, lasso, serape, and all.

The rider was a man of striking appearance, dark-faced, black-eyed, and with long, drooping moustache, while his ebony locks fell upon his broad shoulders.

He was attired in the dress of a Mexican gentleman, and there was a perfect ease, grace, and air about him of one conscious of his power and very proud of himself.

Coming up, he drew rein and saluted his captain politely, yet coldly, paid no attention to the Boy Bugler, and said, in a somewhat airy tone:

"Dallas, have you seen any of my horses astray on your ranch?"

"I have not, sir."

"If you do, send me word at once, and I will pay you."

"I have no one to send, Don Ruiz, and I do not care for pay for a neighborly act."

"You have a number of cowboys, so send several over to search for your stray stock."

The Don did not reply to Dan Dallas, but, turning to the Boy Bugler, said:

"You certainly made night hideous, Agramonte, by that bugle call night before last."

"What was it all about, Captain Chase?"

"I heard that you were in Mexico, Don Ruiz, so how did you hear the bugle call?" asked Captain Charlie.

The dark face of the ranchero flushed, but he replied:

"I did expect to go over the Rio Grande, but was detained, hence I heard that boy's wild call."

"Yet did not obey the summons?"

"I told Jose Cara to make my excuses."

"Don Ruiz Valdos, you are a liar!"

"What?"

"This to me?" cried the Don, his face livid now and his eyes burning.

"You never saw Jose Cara to tell him, but sent a letter by Mexican Pablo."

"Don Ruiz Valdos, I know you as you are, a traitor and a scoundrel, but I waive your being such, and demand that you meet me as a gentleman, if, added to your other crimes, you do not also possess that of cowardice."

The words were calm, but cutting, and the Don seemed fairly stunned by them.

Dan Dallas stood in front of his cabin, looking on in utter amazement.

He could not grasp the situation.

The Don had seemed also to be in the same position, for the quarrel was so unexpected, the insult so sudden and directly given, that he could not at first find words to answer.

But Don Ruiz was no coward.

He hated Charlie Chase with all the fervor of his nature, and he had longed for just such an opportunity to try conclusions with him, that he might get revenge for his having been his successful rival for the love of Senorita Agramonte.

The opportunity had come without his seeking it.

He had been insulted by the man he had longed to try conclusions with.

So, after a moment to collect his surprised senses, he returned:

"Your motive in insulting me, Captain Chase, I do not understand; but the words you have addressed to me can only be wiped out by your death, or mine."

"That is what I intend, Don Ruiz, for you are too dangerous a man to be allowed to run at large."

"You know what I mean."

"I do not; but that matters but little."

"Then let me tell you that both of your fellow-Spaniards, spies of Spain against Cubans, have both been shot as traitors by the Cowboy Clan, and your letter is in my possession, as well as one written to you by Jose Cara."

The Spaniard saw that he was caught, and said with a sneer:

"As an American citizen, I wish to protect the laws of neutrality between the United States and Spain."

"I happen to get information of a reliable source from Cuba, and am aware that the Senor Rafael Agramonte, remembering the value of Texan cowboys as men of war, intended to come here for a few hundred of the brave fellows to aid in the fight against Spain."

"His intentions were nipped in the bud, and you have been fool enough to take up his quarrel."

"To thwart you in breaking the law I have moved in the matter."

"Of the intention which you imply to Senor Agramonte, I know nothing, nor does his brother here."

"But I do know that he is in trouble, and his old comrades, excepting the spies in the band, have sought to aid him."

"You, as the chief Spanish spy, have sought to destroy the very band of which you are a member, and, though I could have you tried as a conspirator before the clan, I do not, but personally call you to account for your treachery, Don Ruiz Valdos."

"Dallas, I am sure, will act for you, under the circumstances, so name your weapons."

"I shall, as the challenged party, name weapons, time, and place of meeting, and also choose my own second."

"Pardon me, but the place is here, the time the present, and you can select weapons, for you have a rifle, revolver, and bowie, as I have."

"As to a second, take Hotspur Harry, and Dallas will act for me."

"I will meet you elsewhere, senor, not here."

"You will meet me here, for you are too dangerous a man, hold too valuable a secret, to go from here."

"Then you intend to murder me?"

"You know better; but meet me you shall, and here and now."

#### CHAPTER XVI.

##### TREACHERY.

The Don was cornered. He was not a coward, but he did not wish to fight then and there.

His two spies were dead, for he did not doubt what Captain Chase had told him; but he was a man of resources, and he wished to let others know what he knew, so that he could strike a blow from his grave, should he fall in the meeting with his chief.

He knew that Captain Chase was a fearless man, and known as one who could wield a sword, a knife, and send a bullet to dead centre.

But Don Ruiz Valdos also knew that he was himself a very dangerous man.

He did not dread a meeting, for he was quick as a flash, and noted as a dead shot.

He only wanted time.

This he was striving to get.

Captain Chase was striving just as hard not to give it to him.

A meeting then and there was just as fair for one as the other.

The Don must not be allowed to go free to tell what he could as to the intention of the Cowboy Clan.



If Charlie Chase fell, the Don must meet the Boy Bugler.

If the latter fell, then Dan Dallas must hold him a prisoner, and report to the clan what had happened.

There were men in the clan who would still seek to rescue Rafael Agramonte.

"Come, Don Ruiz, if you do not meet me as man to man, I shall simply make you prisoner and have Dallas guard you beyond the time when you can do any harm."

The Don realized the situation and replied:

"You, as captain of the Secret Clan, must be obeyed."

"I will meet you now."

"You are wise."

As I have the right to choose, I will make the arrangements to suit myself."

"Do so."

"I am content."

"We will take position two hundred yards apart, and ride at a charge toward each other, neither firing until we reach a spot fifty yards from the goal, and marked by this boy and Dallas standing there, and neither of them armed."

"Then we can open fire with our rifles, firing as we approach, and until one or the other falls dead."

Captain Chase smiled and responded:

"I agree to your terms, Don Ruiz, with one exception."

"What is it?"

"Why, your plan to murder the Boy Bugler and Dallas."

"I do not understand."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"You want them to take their positions unarmed, so you can kill me and at once turn your repeating rifle upon them."

"But they take their stand, rifle in hand, and this duel is to be a fair one, with favor shown to neither you nor I."

"That's what I say," said Hotspur Harry, and he added:

"I'll see to it that that Spanish fox fights fair."

"This is splendid," cried the youth, with great enthusiasm at his success.

"So will I, Hotspur Harry," said Dan Dallas, in a determined tone.

The face of the Don grew black with rage.

He seemed half tempted to turn his rifle upon the three then and there.

But he thought better of it.

He saw that his plot had been quickly read by Captain Chase.

After a moment he said:

"As before, you wrong me."

"Go to your position and I will go to mine."

"Harry, keep your eye upon the Don until he takes his position."

"Dallas, you take your stand nearest to me."

"Hotspur Harry, you give the word to start, when ready."

The Don bit his lips savagely.

He had been thwarted again, for the idea had come to him to drag the captain from his saddle, then Hotspur Harry and Dallas, as all started for their respective positions.

He was trapped, so rode toward his stand in silence, yet on the watch for an opening to do mischief.

He was quick to act, for an opening came for him to do so.

Captain Charlie, feeling that the man must act squarely now, had turned to point out the stand he would take, with that for Dallas also.

Dallas and the Boy Bugler had their rifles swung at their backs, the latter having left his horse by the cabin, and

the former not having been mounted, as he was on foot when the others rode up.

Quick as an electric spark Don Ruiz threw his rifle to his shoulder, half a second was time enough for his aim, and the bullet cut through the crown of the broad sombrero worn by the Cowboys' Captain.

Instantly the rifle was leveled at the Boy Bugler, who was nearest to him, the Spaniard never thinking for an instant that he had not sent his first bullet through the head of the chief, and his finger was upon the trigger when the crack of Captain Chase's weapon was heard, and out of his saddle the Don pitched head first.

It was quickly done, and so unexpected that had his first bullet killed Captain Chase, both Hotspur Harry and Dan Dallas would have been his victims also, ere they could have unslung their rifles to fire.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE VENTURE.

"I expected it, and was ready for him. But it was a close call."

So said the Cowboys' Captain as he took his sombrero off and looked at the hole in it, adding:

"Yes, a drop of blood, for the bullet just grazed the scalp."

"He's done for captain," and Dallas motioned to where the Don lay.

"Catch his horse, Dallas, for this matter must be kept quiet, with the work we have on hand."

"I congratulate you, sir," called out Hotspur Harry, and he walked toward the prostrate form of the Don.

A minute after he cried:

"Come here quick, for he is not dead."

Captain Chase spurred quickly to the spot, and found that Hotspur Harry had turned the Don over upon his face.

In his right side a stain marked where the bullet had entered.

But the Don was alive and breathing heavily.

Dallas had caught the Don's horse, and now came running up.

Captain Charlie wore an anxious look, and Hotspur Harry asked:

"What is to be done?"

For a moment the chief did not answer.

Then he said:

"He must be cared for, and well."

"I will send the clan's surgeon to him, for you, Dallas, will give him shelter and care for him."

"Certainly, sir."

"I will do anything in my power for you, Captain Charlie."

"I thank you, Dallas."

"Let us remove him to your cabin."

This was done at once, and the wounded Don was made as comfortable as circumstances admitted of.

The wound looked to be a serious one, yet none of the three could tell, and the Don appeared to be unconscious.

"We will go on now, Dallas, and I'll send Doctor Tyler to you at once, along with certain things you will need."

With this the Captain and Hotspur Harry remounted their horses and pressed on rapidly to the little town nearest the ranches.

Doctor Tyler was found at home, and he started with all speed for the little home of Dan Dallas, while one of the clan, then in town, was to follow with needed supplies and comforts for the wounded man.

"Now, Harry, we must notify the clan of what has happened, having a courier go to each ranch, and you and I will start at once then on our way."

"I will get back here at the earliest moment with a suitable vessel, and you can push with full speed for Key West, charter a craft there and run to Cuba."

"There are friends of your brother in Key West, and they will help you to get a vessel and crew without delay, and once landed I have no fear but that you can take care of yourself."

"Send back all instructions at once to me by the craft that takes you out, and I will send into Key West for them, and then know just what to do."

"I will leave nothing undone, sir, that will help along our good cause," was the answer of the youth.

The courier was then dispatched to the ranches to report what had occurred and have the cowboys meet at a certain rendezvous several days sooner than had been at first intended.

Returning to their respective ranches, the Captain and his Boy Ally arranged for their departure and indefinite stay away from home, and then set out with all speed to catch the train to New Orleans.

While Captain Chase halted in the Crescent City, Hotspur Harry kept straight on by rail for Tampa, to catch the steamer for Key West.

He was fortunate in catching the steamer as she was about to sail, and after a quick run reached Key West, where he at once sought out an old Cuban friend of both his father and brother.

Quickly he informed him of the cause of his coming, and asked his advice and aid.

The reply of the Cuban was:

"You are a brave boy, and indeed I will help you, for your father was one of our noblest Cuban patriots."

"I also have learned of the arrest of your brother, and we Cubans all know that being a prisoner to Spain is to condemn one to death."

"You are fortunate in arriving just at this time, for there is in port a fine American steam yacht on a cruise, and her owner is engaged to my daughter, and will be only too willing to aid Cuba by landing you upon the coast."

"He is a daring fellow, and I will send along a Cuban coast pilot now here, and who can return in the yacht and be picked up by your Cowboy Captain when he comes along."

"We will also get our yachting friend to stand off in the gulf to watch for the steamer of Captain Chase, and thus save considerable time, for you know time is precious in dealing with Spaniards, as those of your name know through sad experience, my lad."

"Indeed we do, sir," was the sad reply.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MIDNIGHT LANDING.

The yacht owner was seen at once by the Cuban in Key West, who, for very good reasons, appreciated by the patriots, will be nameless in this story, while I will call his expectant son-in-law by an assumed name.

Instantly the American yachtsman grasped at the chance to do the very thing he had longed to do, aid the cause of the fair Cuban girl whom he loved.

"I will place my vessel, crew, and self wholly at your service, senor, and be ready to set sail at once with your young friend," replied Captain Leon De Leon, the owner of the pretty and fleet steam yacht Faithful.



It was therefore just three hours after his arrival in Key West that Hotspur Harry found himself, in the garb of a sailor, with "Yacht Faithful" upon the band of his cap, making his way down to the pier where he was to take a boat out to the pretty craft in which he was to set sail upon his perilous mission.

Captain De Leon met him as he stepped on deck, carrying a gripsack containing his own clothing and certain disguises that might prove useful to him.

The yachtsman was a frank-faced, good-looking young man of thirty, with the air of one who dare risk much, and he greeted the youth cordially, and bade him go into the cabin and rig out in his own clothing, now that he had gotten on board without attracting the attention of the numerous Spanish spies constantly on the alert for strangers, clues, and a chance to make money by the capture of a Cuban filibuster.

As the yacht, just before sunset, sped out into the gulf, Hotspur Harry came out of the cabin, rigged in citizen's dress, and joined the young captain on deck.

He was delighted with the yacht, her owner, and crew of twenty men, and at once noted her speed.

"She is making fifteen knots, and if we have to run for it, can log, under a hot push, a trifle over eighteen, so there are few Spanish cruisers we need fear."

"But then we are on a cruise, and the only wrong we are doing is to land you upon the Cuban coast, while you see the Stars and Stripes, over our deck protects us."

"Yes, sir," said Harry, and then he made bold to remind Captain De Leon that the Virginian was captured far out in the gulf, with the Stars and Stripes flying over her, and which was pulled down and trampled upon by the crew of the Spanish cruiser Tornado, while Captain Fry, General W. A. C. Ryan, General Verona, and many others had been ruthlessly murdered, when carried to port, by General Burriel.

"Yes, but that was owing to too much diplomacy on the part of our Government and not enough action."

"Our naval officers feared to act, dreading dismissal, but it would be different now, for the people of the United States would demand quick vengeance if another outrage were to be attempted by Spain upon our flag."

"Right or wrong, Agramonte, I would take the chances now, and dare Spain to haul down the flag from my peak, well knowing that should it be done war would be declared."

"I should hate to see the United States go to war with Spain, sir, but I do long to see Cuba free, and then made one of the stars in the American flag," was the reply of the young Texan.

The Faithful went swiftly on her way, but so gauged her speed that she should run into the coast of Cuba by night.

The Cuban pilot had also gone on board in the sailor garb of one of the crew, and he held a long consultation that night in the cabin with Hotspur Harry and Captain De Leon.

The pilot knew the coast well about the Wild Flower Plantation, and it was agreed that the yacht should run in, land Harry, then put to sea, and the next night return to the same place, and have the youth meet her, and have made all arrangements for the landing of the Cowboy Clan from the steamer.

As Hotspur Harry, in his stay at the plantation, had thoroughly learned the

surroundings, he felt no fear but that he could reach the overseer's home unseen, and find shelter there until the arrival of the Cowboy Rescuers.

The next day the coast of Cuba loomed up in the distance, just at sunset, and the yacht was then pushed to full speed to approach in the darkness.

Not a light was allowed to be seen on board, and swiftly she glided through the waters of the gulf, the dark shores ahead rising more and more visible as she neared them.

The pilot now stood at the helm, and the young Texan was by his side, with Captain De Leon standing near.

Forward and amidships the crew were grouped together, gazing at the dark shores and wondering what it all meant, for no explanation had been offered thus far.

As the yacht drew nearer, Captain De Leon went forward, and deeming some explanation due, said:

"Men, the young man who came aboard at Key West is a Texan, whose family in Cuba are in trouble, and it is my wish to land him there to see them."

"That we may not come into trouble with any Spanish cruisers, I ordered lights out, for, though within the law, I do not wish to be brought to."

The crew were a good lot of American sailors, from fore-castle hand to coal-heaver, cook to cabin boy, and they were wholly satisfied that whatever their captain did was right, for all were devoted to him.

Soon after the Faithful glided in under the overhanging bluffs, just a league distant from the Wild Flower Plantation, and, without anchoring, a boat was lowered containing only the pilot as oarsman and Hotspur Harry, not one of the crew going.

In half an hour after the pilot returned and said, simply:

"I landed him all right, sir."

"That is a brave lad."

"He is, indeed, and I hope no harm will befall him."

Then the Faithful went steaming out into the gulf once more.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE BOY BUGLER'S LONE TRAIL.

"Well, lad, I am sorry I am to leave you alone," said the Cuban pilot, as the boat touched the shore.

The young Texan grasped his hand and replied:

"I do not fear to be alone here."

"I will return to this spot to-morrow night, or have some one here, if I cannot come."

"If the yacht cannot come in for some reason, it will be the next, and the next, until we meet, or you get the papers I wish to send to Captain De Leon for my chief."

"I understand."

"Good-by, Senor Pilot."

Then, with a warm grasp of the hand, the youth sprang ashore, with his gripsack, and his weapons about his waist.

He stood watching the pilot row back, and waited until the dark hull of the yacht faded away out into the gulf.

"Thank Heaven, there was no cruiser about to give chase."

"It is strange, too, when Spain pretends to guard the coast so well."

"Well, now to find out what is before me, for I confess this is right ticklish work, though the game is more than worth the risk."

"Let me see, there is a trail leads up from this shore, and I ought to reach Mendoza's home within an hour."

"But what if his house is guarded?"

"Well, I'll wait until I come to that bridge before I cross it."

With this the young Texan shouldered his grip and set out to face whatever danger was before him.

A walk of a few minutes brought him to the trail he had spoken of, and up it he went until he reached the highlands above.

There he found two trails, one leading, as he knew, to the villa, the other to the home of the overseer and the quarters of the negroes.

He took the latter trail, and after quite a long walk came out upon a cliff overlooking the gulf.

There he beheld the little village of the plantation hands, and a short distance from them was the more imposing home of the overseer.

All was darkness and silence.

"What if I raise the dogs to baying?" he muttered.

Gazing out upon the gulf, he could see nothing of the yacht, and knew that she must be miles away.

But close in shore he beheld the lights of a Spanish cruiser, as he knew it must be, creeping along the shore.

"She is on the hunt for filibusters."

"The yacht had a close call."

"Now to reach that house unseen."

He moved cautiously forward, and after keeping in the shadows of the trees, and expecting a pack of dogs to rush out upon him at any moment, he reached the home of the overseer.

It was silent, dark, and no one was about.

He waited a few minutes, and was about to approach the door, when he heard hooffalls.

Instantly he shrank back into the shelter of the foliage near him.

Then from the road leading to the villa appeared a horseman.

He halted before the house and called out in Spanish:

"Ho, within there!"

"I am here," and the voice of Vance Mendoza it was that answered him from within.

It was too dark for Hotspur Harry to see the horseman well, but he was confident that he was a Spanish soldier.

Receiving the answer, the horseman rode around the house, halted on the cliff, then returned the way he had come.

As he disappeared the young Texan rose and quickly approached the door, upon which he knocked and called out in Spanish:

"Ho, Mendoza, come to the door."

"It is dangerous work to unpar at night."

"Who are you?"

"A friend."

"Friends are scarce in Cuba now."

"Who is with you?"

"My wife and child."

"No one else?"

"No."

"Who are you?"

"Harry."

An exclamation was heard, then the door opened, and a voice said:

"Thank God!"

"Come in, quick, for every hour a Spanish soldier comes here on his rounds."

"One just left."

"I saw him," and the hands of the youth and the Cuban overseer were grasped in a grip of iron.

"You have just landed, Senor Harry?"

"Not over an hour ago."

"With what force?"



"I am alone."

"Then nothing can be done?"

"Oh, yes, for I am ahead to reconnoiter, and the Cowboy Clan of Texans are to follow; the bravest men you ever saw, and my brother's old rangers."

"Good! thank Heaven!" fervently said the overseer.

"And my brother?"

"Is, as I wrote you, a prisoner in the fortress on the mount, and that means death to follow."

"And my sister?"

"God knows!"

"She may be there, may be—dead."

The youth bowed his head an instant.

But quickly he rallied and said:

"And Rafael's wife?"

"Is under guard at the villa, where a Spanish regiment of cavalry is encamped, three hundred strong."

"Just wait until Captain Charlie strikes them with his Cowboy Clan."

"Then they are coming?"

"Oh, yes. Texas cowboys never go back on a true pard."

"I knew you would come, but I did not know just what you could do."

"It is my hope that the senorita is in the fortress also, but God knows."

"A Spanish officer, and a good man, the commandante of the regiment, has protected the Senora Agramonte at the villa, for he knew her well."

"Come, I must hide you until we can decide what is best; but God bless you, brave boy, for what you have done," and the voice of the overseer quivered with emotion.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SPANISH GUARD.

The overseer of the Wild Flower Plantation realized the full danger he was in, himself and family, as well as the daring youth who invaded the soil of the Ever Faithful Isle.

His letter to Hotspur Harry had fully shown the situation, of how Rafael Agramonte, suspected of being secretly a Cuban patriot, had been arrested in his own home, had taken the life of a Spanish officer, and was then taken to the mountain fortress a prisoner, while his sister had been carried off, no one knew where, and his wife was kept as a hostage in her own wrecked villa.

The overseer had been spared for some reason, yet he was constantly under the watch of the Spanish soldiers.

For Harry Agramonte to be found there would mean death to him and the overseer, and quickly.

Vance Mendoza was therefore anxious to get the youth in hiding.

He wanted him to be where he would be free to act, should a guard be put at his house, as the overseer constantly feared would be the case.

"My boy, you must not stay here, for each hour the sentinel comes, awakes me, as you saw, rides to the cliff, and looks up and down the coast for filibustering vessels, and returns to the villa, where the camp of the Spaniards is."

"I should not be here, Senor Mendoza, for if they took a notion to put a sentinel over your home I would be caught like a rat in a trap."

"That is just it, Harry."

"Why not go to the Glen Muerte where the massacre took place in the last war, for you took me there when I was last in Cuba, you remember, and it is not far from here and near the point where the yacht will come."

"Just the spot, Harry."

"The Spanish soldiers dread the spot, saying it is haunted by their dead com-

rades whom your father caught in a trap there and spared not one of them, for you remember it was the band that had carried the Black Flag against all Cubans."

"Yes, and they deserved their doom."

"Rafael was in that fight, you know, though he was younger than I now am."

"Ah, yes, he made a great record in the few years' war as the Boy Patriot."

"But the Death Glen is the very place, and I'll have my wife get you up a bottle of cold tea, some provisions and a blanket or two, and by that time the Spanish guard will again be here on his rounds."

"Then we can go to the glen, and I'll get back before the guard comes around again."

"All right, senor; but I will want some oil for the signal lamps I have in my gripsack."

"There are five of them, two red, two green, and a white light."

"I will fill them for you and give you a can of oil as well."

"But now to work, while you stay here."

The courier entered another room, leaving the young Texan alone in the dark.

In twenty minutes he returned, carrying a bag of provisions, a large bottle of tea being in it, and a roll of blankets.

He had also filled the five lamps, and all was in readiness for the start as soon as the sentinel had come on his rounds and departed.

They had not very long to wait, for soon the approaching hoofbeats were heard, and the mounted guard rode up to the door.

"Ho, within there!"

He sternly called out the words.

The courier did not answer.

"Ho within!"

"Answer, or I enter!" cried the Spaniard.

In a drowsy manner, as though thus awakened, the overseer answered:

"Well, senor!"

"Why did you not answer at once?"

"I suppose I am getting used to your visits, and do not so readily wake up."

"Don't keep me waiting again, for we don't like this night ride, and may wake you up with a bullet fired through your door."

"Oh, Senor Spaniard! surely you would not do that, for you might kill my wife or child."

"Little loss would they be," was the heartless response, as with a rude laugh the courier rode on.

"You see what kind of a merciless horde we have to deal with, Harry."

"Yes, but there is a day of retribution coming, when my cowboy comrades strike them."

"Yes, and may the day be soon."

"He has gone down to the cliff."

"Yes, looking for filibusters."

"Now he returns."

"We will start as soon as he is gone."

The guard came back by the house and again hailed, as though merely for the pleasure of keeping the overseer awake.

The answer came promptly, and as the Spaniard disappeared the overseer said:

"Now, Senor Harry, we will start for the Death Glen."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SIGNAL BEACON.

The young Texan and the overseer hastened from the house, for the latter had two miles to go before his return,

and he knew that he must be back in his house when the guard again came around.

Harry knew where the Glen of Death was, having been there several times before; but he had visited by the trail leading from the villa, and not the overseer's house.

There was a short cut from the latter's house, and this was to be taken.

Rapidly the two went along through the darkness, and after a walk of fifteen minutes the overseer, who was leading the way, turned into a deep glen, wild in the extreme.

It ran back from the coast, with lofty, deep cliffs on either side, and here had camped the Spanish band which the Patriot of the Ten Years' War had surprised and cut to pieces, giving the place afterward the name of the Death Glen.

It was a picturesque place by day, a weird, lonely and gloomy spot by night, and the graves of the Spanish dead blocked the entrance.

Going back half a mile it ended abruptly in a wall of rock, over which fell a tiny stream.

Here the boy was to remain in hiding until the yacht Faithful returned on the following night, and afterward until the coming of the steamer bearing the Cowboy Rescuers.

If found, his death would be certain.

A spot was found for him to rest, his blankets spread by the light of the white lantern, and then the youth accompanied the overseer back to the coast.

"You must get all the rest you can, Harry, for to-morrow night you will be on watch, you know."

"The cliff at the end here you can scale, you know, and set your signals, and they will be only seen at sea."

"If you see a vessel with lights, coming up or down the coast, you will know it is not the yacht, but a Spanish cruiser, so be careful not to show your lights, or they will send a boat ashore to investigate."

"Yes, I thought of that, and the yacht will show no lights and come straight out of the Gulf."

"Good!"

"Now, good-night, and I'll run here between guard rounds to-morrow night and visit you."

"My signal will be three sharp whistles."

"I'll remember, but do you hurry back now."

The overseer sped swiftly away, and after looking out over the Gulf for a moment, the boy climbed the cliff and selected his place to display his signal beacon.

He wished to have all ready for his work on the following night.

Then he returned to his little camp, made a circle of a horse-hair lasso around his blankets, to keep off creeping reptiles and turned in for the night.

He had eaten a lunch at the house of the overseer, so kept his provisions for the morrow.

When the dawn came it did not penetrate that dark abode, until the sun was well up, and the tired youth slept until nearly noon.

Then he awoke, had his cold breakfast, and afterward reconnoitered as far as he dared.

All the afternoon he slept, but just at sunset he ascended the cliff, carrying his outfit with him, and arranged his lamps in the order of the signals agreed upon with Captain De Leon.

Taking his sea glass, he swept the horizon with it, and far away saw the three slender masts of a vessel.



"If it was a three-masted schooner she would have sail up, but her topmasts are bare.

"It is the yacht, though I do not see any smoke.

"There, she has changed her course, and is coming head on.

"Yes, it is the Faithful, and faithful she is."

Darkness had now fallen, and the youth took his post of duty.

Soon after the lights were visible coming along the coast.

"It is a Spaniard.

"How silly to look for a foe with lights shining.

"Thank goodness, he is going by."

The Spanish cruiser went slowly along and disappeared from view.

Then the young Texan lighted his lamps, shielding them with his blanket.

He waited awhile, and taking his glass swept the sea.

He could just barely discern a dark object out upon the gulf.

"It must be the yacht.

"I will display the signal—red on each end, then green and white in the centre, and that reads:

"All safe, run in!"

Removing his blanket, the five lights shone out over the gulf in the order named, yet were protected by the rocks from view up and down the coast.

Soon the dark object upon the water grew larger, and assured that it was the yacht, the boy put out his lights, descended the cliff, and reached the shore just as Taos, the pilot, came in his boat.

"Good for you, Senor Harry," he said.

"You saw my signal all right?"

"Oh, yes."

"And Captain De Leon?"

"Sent his best wishes, but would not come, as he wished to be able to swear that not one of his crew had landed on the coast of Cuba, or held communication.

"I am not one of the crew, you know."

"Here are the letters that I wrote for Captain Chase; but don't delay, for Spanish cruisers are patrolling the coast."

The pilot had not left the boat, but took the papers and started back for the yacht.

As he did so a light was visible coming around a headland a league distant.

"Row for your life!

"It is a Spanish cruiser," cried Harry.

And row for his life Taos, the Cuban pilot, did.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE MEETING IN THE GULF.

Hotspur Harry was in a fever of excitement.

He was safe, the danger was not for him, but the yacht.

The cruiser's lights came on swiftly, and the yacht still did not move.

Taos, the pilot, had muffled his oars, so could not row as rapidly, but he made the best time possible back to the yacht.

Captain De Leon had seen the lights and knew well what they were.

He could desert the pilot and run off.

This he would not do.

The yacht must remain to do full duty by the pilot and the brave boy who had risked so much.

This she did, for not until the boat was swung at the davits did she move.

If the cruiser kept a bright lookout the yacht must be seen, as she moved out from under the shadow of the shore.

She was seen, and at once a bright flash came from the bows of the Spanish cruiser, and a solid shot flew over the topmasts of the Faithful.

"Fairly good shooting that.

"Run up the flag, though they can't see it," coolly ordered Leon De Leon.

Then he said:

"Tell the engineer to give her every pound she will stand."

The order was given, and the Faithful went flying over the waters.

Not a light was shown, for the young yachtsman wished to remain unknown.

He would run like a deer, but if the yacht was crippled, then Spain would have to answer to the United States for firing on a yacht that had temporarily anchored on the coast.

The yacht and crew must take the risk of a chase.

This was done, for the cruiser started in full pursuit, and again and again the deep booms of her bow gun echoed along the coast.

The flash illumined the cruiser for a few seconds, and she was seen to be a heavily armed vessel.

But it was also seen that the engineer was doing his duty by the Faithful, for her twin screws were sending her along at an eighteen-knot clip, while the Spaniard was barely making fourteen.

If the shots did not cripple her, the yacht would run out of range of them within half an hour.

But a shot carried away the mizzen topmasts.

Still she held on.

Another, a shell, burst over her decks, and the pieces of iron rained down upon her.

But no one was hurt.

A third cut the flag at her peak to ribbons.

A fourth, with a loud twang, went through the smokestack.

Still the Faithful sped on.

Then the maintop was crippled, and swung by the stays.

"We are getting out of range rapidly," said Leon De Leon, calmly, addressing the Cuban pilot.

"Yes, senor, her shots are both dropping short and flying wide," was the answer.

No other shot touched the yacht, and in half an hour more the Spanish cruiser had to give up the chase.

"Well, pilot, you saw my young friend Agramonte?" and De Leon turned to Taos.

"Yes, sir.

"Here is a letter from him for you, and another for Captain Chase, who commands the band of Cowboy Rescuers, senor."

De Leon went to the cabin to read his letter, while the yacht slackened speed to eight knots.

Having read his letter, De Leon then wrote in his yacht's log as follows:

"On night of —th ran in close to shore of Cuba at point near —.

"Did not anchor, nor show lights, fearing to be seen, and mistaken for Cuban filibusters.

"Was seen by Spanish cruiser, chased for three leagues, fired on forty-seven times, five shots striking vessel but doing no severe damage.

"The United States flag was flying at peak, and cut in pieces by shell bursting as it struck it.

"Night was dark, flag was not seen.

"Continued to show no lights, and ran out of range.

"Was determined not to let Spaniard bring me to if could avoid it.

"Pleasure cruise continued."

"I guess that states the matter, and war will not follow," said DeLeon, as he read the log entry to his mate.

For ten days the yacht cruised about, sighting Key West at night, and running by day toward Tampa and Punta Rassa, so as to head off the cowboy steamer.

One night a light was reported.

It was seen to be a steamer, and she was heading in toward Cape Romano.

The yacht's lights were put out, and she ran rapidly to cross the steamer's course.

By this means she got well up to her before being seen.

There was some excitement on board when she was discovered, but Leon De Leon at once illumined his yacht to reveal what she was, and threw his search-light upon the stranger, giving five sharp whistles for a signal.

The steamer at once slowed down, and running close up DeLeon hailed:

"This is the American yacht Faithful, Chesapeake Bay Yacht Club, on a pleasure cruise.

"Is that steamer out of a Texas port and with Captain Chase in command?"

"Ay, ay, sir.

"What is your will?" answered a seaman-like voice.

"I will lay to for you to send a boat aboard."

"I will come myself," said the same voice, and ten minutes after there came over the side the form of the Cowboys' Chief, Charlie Chase, now in a sea rig.

"Captain Chase, I believe?"

"Yes, sir; but you have the advantage of me."

"I am the bearer of a letter from Harry Agramonte, sir.

"Come into my cabin, please."

The conference in the cabin lasted fully an hour, and a bottle of wine was opened to the success of the Cowboy Rescuers and later the cause of Cuba Libre.

Then the two vessels parted, the yacht heading for Key West, while the Mustang, as the steamer chartered by Captain Chase was appropriately named, turned her prow toward the coast of Cuba.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### OFF TO THE RESCUE.

Captain Charlie had been most successful in finding a vessel for charter, a tramp steamer of 800 tons burden, and a claimed speed of sixteen knots.

She had just come off the ways, where she had undergone a thorough overhauling as a cattle ship, so was just what he needed.

The charter money was promptly paid, the clearance papers made out to run to Texas ports for cattle, a trusted captain and picked crew selected, and the Mustang sailed for the point agreed upon, Captain Charlie returning by rail to have his men ready to meet her at the rendezvous.

Losing no time, the captain of the Cowboys' Scout Clan had his men assemble at the rendezvous, for he was determined, after the risk to be run in the rescue in Cuba, that the United States authorities should not head off the good work by preventing the expedition through having been informed by some other traitor that might appear.

The rendezvous was reached, by Captain Chase, and with the aid of several faithful fishermen dwelling in the lone spot, a small wharf was built out from the shore for fifty feet or more.

Night came, and with it the cowboys began to arrive, well mounted, splendidly armed and ready to take all chances.

Just before sunset the smoke of a



steamer was sighted, and an hour after dark the Mustang dropped anchor as near shore as she dare run.

A large boat, gotten in New Orleans for the purpose of shipping the horses, was put over and taken ashore, and the work of embarking was begun.

Texans know better how to manage a horse than any other people, and the cowboys of the secret clan soon had their hardy ponies in the boat by the dozen, and on their way to the steamer, where they were hoisted on board and put in stalls on the deck.

The trappings and weapons went next, then the men, and before dawn the last load was about to start when a horseman dashed up at a run, and Captain Chase, who had remained until the last, saw that it was Dan Dallas, the lone rancher, under whose charge he had left the wounded Don.

He had already learned that Don Ruiz Valdos had shown some, yet not much, improvement, and Doctor Ned Tyler had reported that he did not know just what to make of the wound.

He had extracted the bullet, yet the Don seemed to still remain in a half dazed condition.

Now when Dan Dallas dashed up, Captain Chase met him and asked quickly:

"What is wrong, Dallas?"

"The Don has escaped, sir."

"Too late to check us now, however, but to give us trouble perhaps in the future."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, sir, he was playing 'possum on both Doctor Ned Tyler and myself."

"He only wanted to feel his wound was not serious, and gain strength, so he kept quiet until cured of it."

"Then, when I went out to round up my cattle, he got up, saddled his horse and slipped away."

"I then came with all haste to the rendezvous to hurry you off, for he'll be after you hot, if he can find you."

"He will be too late to stop us, even if he finds we are gone, and if he writes to warn the Spaniards, which he doubtless will do, before a letter can reach Havana and word get to the Mountain Fortress, we will have landed and rounded up our game."

"Good-by, Dan, and do you look out for the Don," and the Captain went aboard the boat, which pulled for the Mustang with all speed.

Reaching the steamer, the boat was soon hauled on board, and Captain Chase, joining the Mustang's skipper on the bridge, said:

"Now, Captain Telfair, we'll head for Key West, and push along at full speed, for time counts for everything in this game."

"I'll do it, sir," replied the sailing master, who was an English-American, and an old Confederate blockade runner in the civil war, so was just the man for the work in hand.

Away sped the Mustang, churning off fifteen knots when she got warmed up to it, and laying his course right across the Gulf, Captain Thomas Telfair was running for off Key West, where it was hoped a boat would be met, when the yacht Faithful was sighted.

The result of that meeting in the Gulf is already known to the reader, and now the fortunes of the Mustang and the Cowboy Rescuers must be followed in their perilous run to Cuba, the landing and the round-up of the clan in the duty they had dared undertake in the face of every difficulty and with death surely their doom did they fail.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE BEACON OF HOPE.

"Men, our destiny lies in yonder dark island, for there it is make or mar. I need tell no man to do his duty, for you all have shown your willingness to do everything by coming here."

"If our signals are seen, as agreed upon, we will land upon yonder coast within an hour. There we will find our brave Boy Bugler awaiting us, and he will guide us to the fortress where is held in durance vile your former dearly loved chief, Rafael Agramonte, and perhaps his beautiful sister, Miss Lucita, whom you all know."

"The pilot here, Senor Taos, whom we took from the yacht, has told you of our Boy Bugler's success in landing, and finding his friend Mendoza, the overseer of the Agramonte plantation."

"He has told how the yacht returned under guidance of the Boy Bugler's Signal Beacon, and I have his letter telling me just what to do."

"A Spanish cruiser chased the yacht off the coast. We may meet the same fate; but we are to return, night after night, until our work is accomplished, for we must know no such word as fail."

"If our friends meet us upon our return, and know of our venture, we must be able to say: 'We did our duty.'"

"Now, Pilot Taos, take the steamer, for Captain Telfair gives her into your hands, and land us on the coast of Cuba."

Such had been the address of the cowboys' captain.

No cheer had been given;—they dare not give their wild cowboy yell then, but the silence was more impressive.

On the bridge of the Mustang stood Captain Chase, Pilot Taos, and the skipper, Thomas Telfair.

Not a light was visible; the furnaces were at a white heat, so as to show no smoke, and swiftly revolved the screw as it drove the vessel nearer and nearer to the land of Fateful Memories.

A league only lay between the steamer and the shore, and the eyes of all were strained upon the dark outline of the coast.

The horses, well shod and well cared for on the passage, had been saddled and bridled, ready for the landing.

Each cowboy stood by his pony. Each had his weapons in the best of trim, and each rider had a machete and repeating rifle hanging to their saddle horns.

Some of the men once had possessed fortunes and had seen war in its worst form upon the frontier. Some were there whose gray hair and mustaches told their age, and who, now bound together in the Secret Clan, had once been mortal foes when wearing the blue and the gray. Some of them had served in the cavalry in the United States Army.

All were dead shots; all knew how to wield asabre, and the Cuban cane-knife, known as the machete, would be a desperate weapon in their hands.

Men of stern resolve, they had come to win or die.

"There goes our signal!" said the pilot in a low tone, as, suddenly, upon a cliff lights were visible.

"The Boy Bugler is at his post, true as steel! Noble Hotspur!"

"Yes, the red on each end, the green next the red, and a white light in the centre. That tells us that all is safe and to run in," explained Captain Charlie.

The Cuban pilot slowed down now, and ran the dark steamer close in under the shadows, dropping anchor in the mouth of a deep lagoon where the waters

permitted lying close alongside of the bank and a gangway to be run out, thus saving the delay and worry of disembarking the horses by the flat ferry used on the Texas coast.

Captain Chase was the first to step ashore, and, as he did so, Hotspur Harry grasped his hand.

Oh! how the cowboys wanted to yell at the sight of their brave Boy Bugler, last seen in the clan's retreat in Texas!

But, not a voice arose above a whisper. All comprehended the danger.

"How goes it, Harry?"

"All's well, sir."

"Vance Mendoza has discovered that my brother is in the mountain fortress, and sister Lucita is there also."

"It is just about eight miles from here, and the garrison proper consists of fifty infantry and two gun squads."

"We can get entrance as Spanish cavalry, no doubt. Then it will be a sharp fight, and a race to the steamer."

"A battalion of cavalry are encamped a mile beyond the villa, but a guard is at the house of twenty men, and Colonel Alfredo Delrossa, whom I know, and who is a gentleman, has his quarters in the villa to protect Rafael's wife, who is really a prisoner there."

"If there is a fight at the fortress, the cavalry will start for there, and we can retreat by the lower trail, thus throwing them in our rear."

"We can come back to the trail above and make a dash for the villa, to rescue Rafael's wife, and cut down to the coast to the steamer."

"Mendoza has found out a great deal for me, and, while waiting, I have made nights scouts around until I knew it was getting to be time for your coming, then I dared not leave my post."

"All told, there are five hundred cavalry, a battery, the fortress and its garrison within a dozen miles around."

"Now you know the situation, Captain Charlie, and I will guide you to the fortress, while I know the countersign for the night, as Vance Mendoza was given it by Colonel Delrossa to carry supplies to the villa."

"Can you give me a horse?"

"Yes, indeed, your own pony! And we have others saddled for your brother and the ladies, for, Harry, mark my words, we came on this round-up of Spaniards to win."

The ponies were being led ashore during this conversation; and, half an hour after the steamer ranged alongside the lagoon bank, the cowboys of the clan were ready for the Cuban round-up!

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE COWBOYS' CUBAN ROUND-UP.

It was with a feeling of pleasure that the Boy Bugler sprung into his saddle and rode to the head of the Cowboy Clan, taking his place by the side of Captain Chase.

He was once more mounted upon his splendid pony Lone Star, and by the side of the man who had been his pard and like a father to him.

Two by two the cowboys followed, and leading the way up the sharp trail to the highlands, they came out into a broad road.

Here a halt was made for a breathing spell for the horses, cooped up aboard ship as they had been for days.

They were anxious for exercise, however, the voyage had done them no harm and the start was made.

At first it was a walk, then a trot, as they limbered up, then a canter.

The Boy Bugler had ridden over the trail often, when visiting his brother, and knew it well.



He made no mistake, and when the lights of the fort, situated upon a hill-top, came in view, no halt was made, but at a canter the party dashed up until halted by the sentinel.

Then they halted, and Captain Chase answered the challenge.

It was evident that the sentinel suspected only Spanish cavalry, and Captain Chase gave the countersign:

"Antilles!"

Then he added in his perfect Spanish: "A detachment from Wild Flower Plantation camp."

The gate was thrown open, and the Boy Bugler, having explained the interior of the fortress, the cowboys knew just what to do.

Into the fort they went, and then came the demand for surrender, the Spanish soldiers being entrapped asleep in their hammocks.

What followed was a scene of confusion and death on one side, order and desperate determination on the other.

As no Cuban insurgent force was anywhere near that part of the coast, the surprise was complete, and Spaniards fell by the score, bewildered, terrified, yet a number of them desperately fighting.

But the Texas cowboys, masters in hand-to-hand conflict, fought to win.

The guard house was broken into, the prisoners, half a hundred in number, were set free, and Rafael Agramonte, to his utmost amazement, had a revolver thrust into one hand, a machete into the other, by his young brother, at whose side was Captain Charlie Chase, while the cowboys were masters of the fortress.

"No time for explanations now, Rafael."

"A horse is here for you, and one for Senorita Lucita."

"Where is she?"

"There, in yonder wing."

A moment more and Lucita Agramonte was in the saddle by the side of her young brother, Hotspur Harry, while Rafael and Captain Charlie led the way.

"Bring your dead and wounded, men!" had been the stern order of Captain Chase, and the former were strapped upon their ponies, the latter mounted with a comrade to hold them on.

Then the retreat was begun, and the mountain fortress was left with its garrison of dead and dying men, as proof of the cowboy rescuers' round-up.

Down the trail to the coast dashed the victorious rescuers, the wounded and dead were sent to the steamer, while Captain Charlie followed Rafael Agramonte on to the villa.

As the Boy Bugler had surmised, Colonel Alfredo Delrossa and his men had hastened to the fortress by the upper trail, and the guard left at the villa was quickly overcome and the Senorita Agramonte rescued from her imprisonment.

Down to the lagoon they charged then. The cowboys rode their ponies on board, and came ashore, repeating rifles in hand to check the Spanish cavalry near in pursuit.

Quickly all was made ready to back out of the lagoon. The rifles of the cowboys emptying many a saddle checked the charge of the cavalry.

Stern foremost the Mustang went out of the lagoon, and soon gained the gulf, when up and down the coast far away were seen the lights of Spanish cruisers hastening to the scene, for in the still night the firing had been heard.

"Full speed!" was the order, and the Mustang fairly flew over the waters. A severe tropical thunderstorm soon broke over the gulf and hid her from view.

Full speed was kept up, and when the dawn came the seas were running wild and the Island of Cuba had been lost to sight. But not a Spanish cruiser was visible on the wide waste of waters.

A deep gloom had fallen upon all, for it was known throughout the ship now that the Boy Bugler and his beautiful sister were not on board.

They had started, it was said, after the cowboys went to the villa, to ride to the home of Vance Mendoza and insist that the overseer and his family should leave with them.

But, they had not returned, nor had the overseer been seen.

A bitter blow it was to all.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CONCLUSION.

The Mustang reached the coast of Texas in safety, the landing was made, the good vessel stood out in the gulf under her able captain, and the cowboys, bearing their wounded to a place of safety, having buried their dead in the gulf, started for their respective ranches.

To his own ranch went Rafael Agramonte and his beautiful wife.

But, it was with sad hearts, and the Cuban had solemnly vowed that he would return with a band of bold patriots to strike a blow for Cuba Libre!

"If that brave boy, Harry, and Lucita have met harm, then sweet will be the revenge I seek," he had said, to which Captain Chase responded:

"And I will accompany you, Rafael, for in saving you and your wife I lost Lucita and Harry."

"But first I must find that arrant traitor, Don Ruiz Valdez."

But Don Ruiz had mysteriously disappeared just then, and so the cowboys' captain and Rafael Agramonte at once began their arrangements to return to Cuba.

That they did so in another filibustering expedition the Spaniards know full well, and happy were they to find that the beautiful Lucita and the brave Boy Bugler had escaped from the Spaniards and were safe in the camp of the Cuban patriots, who were wild in the admiration of the midnight invasion by the Cowboy Clan.

THE END.

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